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## **Webinar- Double Standards and Failed Promises: Confronting the International Response to the Genocide in Gaza**

On Wednesday, 8 November, Arab Organisation for Human Rights in the UK (AOHR UK) hosted a critical webinar that cast a stark light on the dire reality confronting Gaza—a reality frequently downplayed or ignored: it is genocide. The forum addressed the chilling truth that the Israeli occupation forces' systematic and deliberate actions against innocent civilians in Gaza amount to genocide. This grim assessment was laid bare, emphasizing that the continuity of such heinous acts is facilitated by a global silence. This silence, a form of tacit complicity, highlights the broader international community's failure to act, underscoring a disheartening truth about the world's indifference to the plight of Gaza's people.

The distinguished panel of speakers for the AOHR UK webinar brought together a diverse and knowledgeable array of voices, each providing unique insights into the situation in Gaza. The line-up included Jim Moran, a former Democratic member of the US House of Representatives; Ken Roth, an esteemed American attorney and a vigilant human rights activist and writer; Matt Carthy, a respected Teachta Dála of Ireland; Adam Shapiro, the Director of Advocacy for Israel-Palestine at DAWN; Jonathan Purcell, a dedicated Public Affairs and Communications Officer at the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians; Alicia Koutsoulieris, the Communications Director at Partners for Palestine; Joram van Klaveren, a noted Dutch politician; and Mohamed Jamil, the AOHR UK Chairman. Providing a steady hand to guide the discussions, journalist Nawras Abu Saleh moderated the event, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the complex issues at hand.



In a poignant address, **Jim Moran** expressed deep disappointment with the United States' reaction to the ongoing situation in Palestine, drawing a parallel to his previous disillusionment with the Bush administration's actions in Iraq. He said, "I don't know that I've ever been as disappointed in America's response to what is happening in Palestine today, similar to my disappointment with the Bush administration's decision to destroy a country, Iraq, after 9/11."

**Moran** shed light on the political pressures facing the only Palestinian member of Congress, stating, "Efforts have been made to censure the sole Palestinian member among the 535 members of Congress... This censure attempt comes as a result of for sharing her own perspective on the current war in Gaza, with a significant number of Democrats and almost all Republicans supporting the motion."

He also pointed out troubling desires among some of his colleagues: "Unfortunately, there have been a number of members of the Congress who want to deport Palestinians, not allow them into the country. All kinds of weird, extremist measures."

The speaker highlighted the concerning consensus in Congress, noting, "What is most troubling is that the vast majority of citizens, and certainly of members of Congress, are wholly behind Israel's destruction of property, and particularly of human life."

**Moran** emphasized the tragic human cost of the war, stating, "How they can look the other way and close their consciences to the fact that we now have more than 10,000 deaths, almost 5000 of those 10,000 of 4800 children have been slaughtered."

He addressed the innocence of the victims: "Children are by definition not responsible for the actions of adults. There are 2.3 million people in Gaza. So, 99.9% of the people living in Gaza are civilians."

Speaking on the dire situation in Gaza, Moran said, "70% of the population of Gaza has been displaced. This is another Nakba. This is, from a Palestinian point of view, it's comparable to a Holocaust where they have nowhere to go."

**Moran** criticized U.S. policy and its implications: "The United States, which is the principal source of international empowerment for the Israeli government, wants to do



more. Wants to give another \$14 billion to the Netanyahu government, basically to kill more Palestinians when it comes right down to it."

He concluded with a grave censure of the actions and policies that he believes contribute to the suffering: "This is a crime against humanity and I find that extraordinarily troubling."

In his contribution, the Member of the Irish Parliament, **Matt Carthy**, brought to light the devastating human toll of the war in Gaza. He stated, "This time last week we were commenting on the fact that 5000 people were then reported to have been killed by Israeli air strikes on Gaza; this week, the figure is well over 10,000." He pointed out the shocking comparison, "More people have been killed in a single week than were killed in the entire conflict in the north of Ireland, which lasted for almost 30 years."

**Carthy** shed light on the victims' identities, saying, "Of those who have been killed by Israel, over 4000 have been children, over 600 have been elderly people, almost 3000 of them have been adult women." He highlighted the ongoing crisis, "There are estimates that there are 2800 Palestinian civilians currently under rubble, including 1300 children."

Expressing his fundamental objection, **Carthy** emphasized, "My fundamental objection is that virtually every single Western leader that has commented on this matter has begun with the words 'Israel has the right,' and I think it is very important now that the international community makes it clear that Israel does not have the right to engage in a ferocious, aggressive assault against an innocent civilian population."

He continued to challenge the international response, asserting, "If the outrage and condemnation of the killing of an innocent Israeli child is not matched by equal outrage and condemnation at the killing of an innocent Palestinian child, then the entire basis of international law is cut to shreds."

**Carthy** condemned the lack of global leadership, "If international and world leaders stand silent when 90 UNRWA staff are killed by Israel, when 192 healthcare personnel are killed by Israel, when 36 civil and defense personnel are killed by Israel, when 47



journalists are killed by Israel, where does the authority to ever again point the finger at other hostile, aggressive action in another part of the world?"

He proudly mentioned Ireland's stance, "Ireland, united politically, has called for a ceasefire and that is the right demand, and unfortunately, we're in a minority of EU states in that regard." Despite the grim situation, Carthy noted that "The UN General Assembly has overwhelmingly adopted a resolution calling for ceasefires and we know of course that Israel has ignored that call."

**Carthy's** speech took on a somber tone as he reflected on the war's direction, "This is a war that is aimed at finally destroying the Palestinian people." He also noted, "The Israeli Prime Minister has indicated that Israel intends to occupy Gaza."

He closed with a call to action and a dire warning, "We must repeat that demand at every single opportunity. But we also need to take political action. There needs to be an economic, political, and diplomatic response internationally. Because if we don't, then the inference is clear. If we don't take action against these blatant breaches of international law, then what we're seeing is that in fact, our outrage at the killing of an Israeli child isn't matched by our outrage at the killing of a Palestinian child." He expressed his "huge concern as to what that means for international law and for the UN charter if we allow that to become the new standard."

**Adam Shapiro**, Director of Advocacy for Israel-Palestine at DAWN, brought forth a critical perspective on the international response to conflicts, highlighting a stark inconsistency. He stated, "There are double standards when it comes to genocide... what's happening in Gaza, which is contemporaneous to what's going on with Ukraine, is a clear double standard."

**Shapiro** pointed out the disparity in Western reactions to international crises, saying, "The Western and particularly American support for the efforts in Ukraine to fight against an aggressor, an aggressive power that has taken over and annexed territory and that is committing more crimes and possibly worse in Ukraine, compared to what's happening in Palestine, not just Gaza, but all over Palestine. That's a clear double standard."



He shed light on the historical neglect of genocidal warnings and actions, stating, "For 30 years or so, when we look at the Rwandan genocide... there were clear warnings issued to the West and we saw complete inaction until it was too late." Shapiro further mentioned, "We've seen a potential genocide and certainly genocidal acts... in Ethiopia's Tigray [region], we've seen it... with Azerbaijanis and Armenians."

**Shapiro** also critiqued the inefficacy of international legal instruments, asserting, "The permission to commit genocide exists in the international system despite international law," and "If international law, international humanitarian law, is anything more than words on paper... the tools that have been set up to investigate and prosecute through the ICC have been rendered almost completely meaningless."

Reflecting on the Palestinian situation, **Shapiro** highlighted historical parallels, "In terms of Palestinian experience, what we are seeing here is... not an exception. The encirclement of Gaza City by Israel echoes back to the 1982 encirclements of Beirut." He recounted the harrowing aftermath of that time, "The suburbs Sabra and Shatila massacre occurred as the Israelis allowed and facilitated Phalangist militias to come in and massacre Palestinians."

He underscored the enduring plight of the Palestinians, "What we are witnessing in Palestine... is an ongoing genocide for 75 years," and detailed recent expulsions, "Just a few days ago in the village of Huwara, 200 Palestinians were expelled from their village in the West Bank."

**Shapiro** added, "This is a 75-year process... it's a settler-colonial effort to take over as much land as possible, with as few people as possible," emphasizing the need to understand the situation in terms of both genocide and settler colonialism to find viable solutions.

Lastly, **Shapiro** criticized Western complicity, "In the case of Israel, unlike many of the other instances from history, the United States primarily, and other countries in the West, not only have no interest in helping, but they also seem intent on encouraging and supporting through the provision of weaponry and other financial aid that enables all of this to happen."



**Jonathan Purcell**, a dedicated Public Affairs and Communications Officer at the International Centre of Justice for Palestinians, delivered a moving speech highlighting the human cost of the Israeli aggression in Gaza. He pointed out, "One of the problems with talking about killings on such a massive scale is that it's so easy to dehumanize people by referring to them only as numbers."

**Purcell** shed light on the personal tragedies behind the statistics, saying, "Each one of these people were loved by friends and families. They had past memories and future dreams." He pointed out the disconnect in political rhetoric, "When politicians talk about Israel's unequivocal right to defend itself... they are not thinking of these people as human beings."

Highlighting the dire situation on the ground, **Purcell** noted, "In the past month, Israel has conducted siege strategies of collective punishment against over 2 million people. It has undertaken the forcible transfer of over a million civilians from north Gaza. It has bombarded civilians on an unimaginable scale."

He emphasized the UK's historical ties and current responsibilities, "The United Kingdom's colonial history in this region does mean that it has a lasting responsibility in relation to the current violence." He criticized the language used by political leaders, "The word unequivocal is so dangerous to use in this context, essentially handing a carte blanche to Israel to respond disproportionately."

**Purcell** accused Israel of severe misconduct, "We have seen Israel commit war crimes, crimes against humanity, and indeed, potentially genocide." He also highlighted the UK's involvement, "UK government complicity in what is happening in Gaza is clear and well established."

He underscored the military link, "UK industry provides 15% of the components in the F-35 stealth combat aircraft that is being used to bombard Gaza as we speak." Purcell also addressed the stance of the UK's Labour Party, "Labour leader Keir Starmer refused to condemn the cutting off of water and electricity to an entire population of over 2 million people."





Reflecting on the broader implications, he pointed out, "Israel's systematic violations of the rights of Palestinians under international law is long-standing." Purcell concluded with a powerful call to action, "With over 10,000 Palestinians killed in just one month, how many more must die before the international community takes a stand to protect these people's lives?"

**Alicia Koutsoulieris**, the Communications Director at Partners for Palestine, delivered an impassioned speech that highlighted the deep-seated issues within the Israeli aggression on Gaza. She pointed out, "On October 7th what happened was not the beginning of something, but a reaction to something. The occupation has been oppressing the Palestinians in the West Bank for over 56 years and the blockade in Gaza for 16."

She shed light on the motivations of Hamas, stating, "Hamas was clear in the beginning... that their actions were in reaction to the ongoing occupation, the way that the Palestinian prisoners are being treated in the military forces in the occupied West Bank and also the recent attacks in the Al-Aqsa Mosque."

**Koutsoulieris** challenged the prevailing narrative, "The constant rhetoric of 'Israel has the right to defend itself'... There's no place in international law that says that an occupying power has the right to defend itself." She affirmed, "Technically, it's the Palestinians that have the right to defend themselves against their occupier."

Addressing the role of the United States, she said, "And with \$3.8 billion of US aid flowing into Israel annually, it's evident that even with such substantial support, their issues remain unresolved." She insisted that the strategy of increasing military aid is misguided and won't solve the underlying issues, emphasizing, "This won't address the real problem: Palestinian people's desire to live freely and with dignity, just like everyone else."

**Koutsoulieris** then highlighted the tragic consequences of the war, "The US government is basically fueling a genocide... over 4000 children have died in over a month." She drew a grim comparison to historical atrocities, "In Rwanda, they killed... as high as 800,000 people in three months."



Questioning the inaction of the international community, she asked, "How many Palestinians are we going to allow to be victims of this atrocity while people are sitting by trying to debate what to call it?" She criticized the restrictions faced by U.S. officials, "Our own elected officials in the US... are not allowed to speak out in defense of the Palestinians."

She condemned the Israeli government's military actions, "The Israeli government... can't tell the difference between a military target and a civilian location." Expressing disappointment in U.S. leadership, Koutsoulieris stated, "It's shameful to watch our US elected officials continue to support this."

Ending with a call to action, **Koutsoulieris** urged, "We need to start reaching out to our elected officials and let them know that this is not how we want to be featured on the world stage and this is not how we want our tax dollars spent." She issued a stern warning, "If our US elected officials don't make a difference and stand up on the right side of history, then we will vote them out and find somebody else who will."

**Mohamed Jamil**, the AOHR UK Chairman, delivered a stirring speech at a recent webinar where he addressed the ongoing genocide in Gaza. He stated, "I want to mourn the value of the West, the value of those who gave a solid green light to Israel to commit these atrocities."

**Jamil** declared, "I will not ever mourn the victims of Palestine. I will not ever, never mourn those killed in Gaza because they are brave." He emphasized his commitment, "I only can stand up for the Palestinian victims and greet them. And do all my effort to support them with all means."

Pointing out the historic struggle, he said, "These people who struggle since 100 years deserve the right to self-defense, not Israel." He shed light on Western policy, "When we look at the policymakers in the West, we see they fall hostages to the events of 7th of October, and we don't know who can free them."

**Jamil** highlighted a key moment with a U.S. official, "When Blinken was asked during his visit to Jordan, 'Are 10,000 deaths not enough to stop this bloody war, not enough





to stop this madness!', he escaped and turned the conversation to the events of 7th October."

**Jamil** called for action, "It's time to put an end to this genocide." And warned against underestimating the people's response, "Don't undermine the people in the streets in the Middle East... they will not be expected to remain silent."

He expressed scepticism about Western democracies, "I am not surprised by the position of the West; these are dictatorship regimes with the mask of democracy." Jamil criticized the efforts to downplay Israeli war crimes and slaughters, "The West regimes try their best until now to wash the crimes of Israel, and its atrocities committed in the daylight."

Reflecting on the ongoing violence, Jamil questioned, "We are witnessing massacre after massacre against people of Gaza and until now they call it self-defence. I am wondering when the West will call what is happening genocide!"

He posed a crucial question, "How we allow these atrocities to happen in the 21st century?" and offered a potential recourse, "Which mechanism we can use to put an end to these atrocities? There is a session called the emergency session in the General Assembly, where countries can take strong measures against this Israeli madness."

Urging for legal action, he stated, "The International Court of Justice... its doors are open. Any state that believes in values, believes in the rule of law, can go there and ask to impose provisions to stop this genocide."

**Jamil** concluded with a grave warning, "The General Assembly's emergency session is still open... to resume and put [forth] a strong resolution to stop this tragedy under the umbrella of the United Nations," and a sobering reminder, "Israel will continue what it has started with unless decisive measures are taken."

**Ken Roth**, the former executive director of Human Rights Watch, delivered a potent speech exposing the Israeli government's military offenses. Roth stated, "Israeli government violating the duty not to fire indiscriminately into civilian areas," accusing



it of committing grave crimes by "ripping up the Geneva Conventions, and flout the standards of humanitarian law."

He brought to light the gravity of these crimes: "It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Israel is firing indiscriminately, leveling entire neighborhoods." Roth did not shy away from calling out the catastrophic impact of such actions: "The use of 2000 pound bombs in a populated area, predictably, results in massive civilian death and injury. I'm brought to the conclusion that this was a disproportionate attack."

**Roth** challenged the military justification for such crimes, asking, "What kind of military presence justifies rendering hundreds of families homeless?" He condemned the Israeli government's insufficient response to the humanitarian needs, stating, "The Israeli government's approval of limited humanitarian aid does not meet the needs of the people."

Highlighting the desperate plight of Gaza's civilians, **Roth** pointed out, "The Palestinian civilian population of Gaza is in severe deprivation. The hospitals don't even have the fuel to run their generators." He accused Israel of criminal behavior by "turning off the water and electricity supplied from Israel," deeming it "a clear violation of humanitarian law."

**Roth** emphasized Israel's responsibility to "avoid indiscriminate and disproportionate crimes in every single attack." He noted that the "bombing largely continued even along the routes of evacuation," underscoring the disregard for civilian safety.

Furthermore, **Roth** criticized Israel's rejection of a humanitarian truce that could have alleviated suffering: "The Israeli government refused even the humanitarian pause that might have allowed some of these issues to be addressed." He underscored the impractical expectations placed on displaced people: "Suddenly a million people are supposed to show up in the south with no provisions for their reception."

Finally, **Roth** addressed the personal tragedies of those who could not or would not leave their homes: "Some people stay behind and refuse to displace due to disability, poverty, or fear of never being able to return," he said, calling attention to the dire consequences of Israel's crimes.



**Joram van Klaveren**, a Dutch politician and former member of parliament, offered insights into the perplexing question of why many Westerners support Israel. He said, "Why do so many Westerners support Israel? The answer is that there are many interests here by many people and many groups, and I will talk about three of them: Christian Zionists, Secular anti-Islam organizations, and the establishment, which by the way is also influenced by the former two."

**Van Klaveren** shed light on the historical underpinnings of Christian Zionism: "A lot of people often think that Zionism started with Theodor Herzl, but it was actually an American Rabbi who around 1860 proclaimed a message that the Jewish people would never find safety and tranquility without their own country."

**Van Klaveren** stated, "Christian Zionists' support for Israel is very religious in nature," distinguishing it from the viewpoint of "Secular anti-Islam politicians and organizations [who] support Israel ideologically, viewing it as an advanced Western post in the Middle East, fighting our fights against Muslims."

He also commented on geopolitical strategies, "The establishments of most Western countries align with the United States, seeing Israel as a geopolitical, economic, and military interest in the region." He quoted President Joe Biden from 1986, "If Israel didn't already exist, America would have had to invent it because of the interests it serves."

The politician observed that "The combination of all these actors and their influence means that many Westerners are almost brought up with the idea that supporting Israel is the right thing to do."

Finally, **Van Klaveren** highlighted the changing tides of public opinion: "Thanks to the internet and social media, many filters have fallen away, and public opinion is slowly turning, as seen in the many pro-Palestine demonstrations attended by people from all walks of life."

## Arab Organisation for Human Rights in UK